

House Republican Press Release

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Press Office: 860-240-8700

Democrats Vote 'NO' on Eminent Domain



House GOP Petition Drive Draws Only Two Democrats

HARTFORD – House Republican Leader Rep. Robert M. Ward today blasted Democrats for refusing to enact eminent domain legislation during a special session and said the majority party has sided with developers and big government over property owners.

“The votes are in. The Democrats followed their leader’s directive and declined to force a special session to stop the wrongful taking of private property for greedy developers and ambitious big city mayors,” Ward said. “The Democrats would rather stage elaborate, pointless hearings rather than take action. I believe the voters will remember.”

The House Republican petition drive to force a special session was signed by 95 percent of the GOP caucus and by 92 percent in the Senate, Ward announced. None of the Senate Democrats signed on and only two of the 99 Democratic House members – Steve Mikutel of Griswold and Shawn Johnston of North Grosvenordale signed. A majority of both chambers is necessary for a special session. The GOP needs 24 more votes in the House and seven in the Senate.

Ward made his statements on the eve of yet another scheduled eminent domain hearing at the Capitol. There have been months of inaction since the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the landmark Kelo case involving New London and a group of property owners in Fort Trumbull. The court found that the state’s eminent domain laws were constitutional but invited the state legislature to amend them if it felt they were too broad.

Ward has refined his legislative proposals to include three initiatives for tomorrow’s hearing.

- Prevent towns and cities from using eminent domain to take land and give it to developers. Developers could still negotiate land sales with willing owners.
- Establish an eminent domain ombudsman to track all eminent domain cases; and
- Implement an immediate moratorium until the state’s statutes can be amended.

Ward said that Democratic-controlled legislature risked becoming an embarrassment on the issue because across the country other states are acting and across Connecticut towns and cities are imposing their own eminent domain bans.

“Yet the majority Democrats who have the legislative power to protect property owners have decided that their own partisan allegiances to urban constituencies and big city mayors, some of whom are running for statewide office this year, are more important than upholding the most basic constitutional rights. It is appalling,” Ward said.

A number of municipalities have taken steps to curb eminent domain use in the last three months, including Speaker James Amann’s own town of Milford. A number of others are contemplating action. Ward said Connecticut could wind up with numerous local ordinances and widely varying restrictions which would result in mass confusion for homeowners and developers.